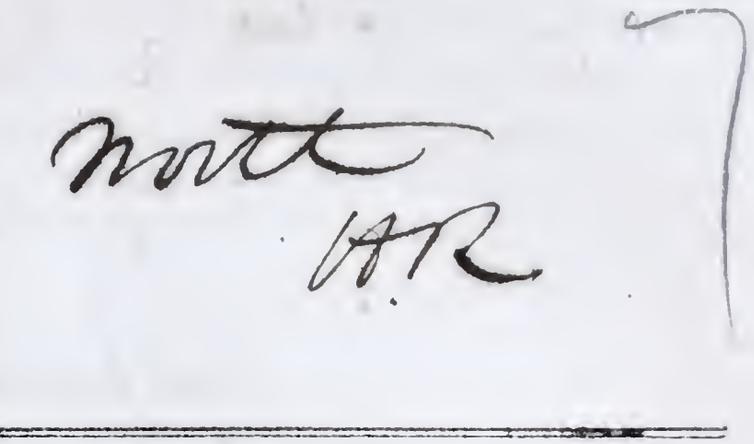

MESSAGE

OF

WILLIAM BIGLER,

GOVERNOR OF PENNSYLVANIA,

TO THE LEGISLATURE, 1855.

A. Boyd Hamilton, State Printer.

Duke

MESSAGE.

To the Honorable the Senators and Members of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly:

GENTLEMEN:—

Whilst the events of the year just closed, present many causes of joy and congratulation, and afford abundant reason for thankfulness to a beneficent Providence for his goodness and mercy—our prosperity and happiness, as a people, I regret to say, has not been unalloyed. The general growth of the country, the progress of the arts and sciences, and other causes of moral and social comfort, have not, it is true, been interrupted; but the loss of valuable lives and property, by the casualties of the elements, has been unusual, both in number and extent; and in certain sections of our Commonwealth the afflictions of pestilence and disease have also been sorely felt. Nor should we estimate lightly the suffering that manifestly exists amongst the poor in our cities and towns. The drought of the season deprived the husbandman, to some extent, of the anticipated rewards of his labor, and lessened the means of human subsistence; whilst the depression in monetary and business affairs, has deprived many laborers and mechanics of their usual earnings. The means of subsistence are thus greatly enhanced in value, at the same time that the opportunities of earning them are much diminished. The field for charity is consequently wider than usual; and to meet its reasonable demands on the part of those blessed with an abundance, will be to sustain the christian character, and measurably to merit the continued bounty of Heaven.

The operations of the Treasury for the last year, will be presented to you in detail, by the head of that department. The results are highly satisfactory, showing a steadily increasing revenue from nearly all the ordinary sources.

The aggregate receipts for the fiscal year of 1854, including loans and the balance in the Treasury, on the 30th of November, 1853, amounted to the sum

of $6,665,912 01. The gross payments for the same period, to the sum of $5,424,983 29; leaving a balance on the 30th of November, of $1,240,929 72.

The extraordinary payments consisted of the following items, to wit: loans repaid, $235,888 40; to the North Branch canal, $206,552 76; to the construction of the new railroad over the Allegheny mountains, $461,921 03; to the payment of debts on the public works, $389,946 38. Of the balance remaining in the Treasury, a portion is applicable to the payment of the State debt, and the remainder to current demands.

The simple, or ordinary operations of the Treasury for the same period, were as follow, to wit: the receipts, exclusive of loans and the balance in the Treasury on the 30th of November, 1853, realized from permanent sources, amounted to the sum of $5,218,099 00. The ordinary expenditures, including the interest on the State debt and all the payments on the finished lines of the public works, excluding the payments on new works and loans, amounted to $4,116,744 84; being $1,101,490 15, less than the receipts.

This statement may be regarded as the workings of the Treasury simplified; and as establishing the gratifying fact, that the present reliable revenues of the State, exceed the ordinary or unavoidable expenditures, over a million of dollars; and that, relieved from the demands for the construction of new improvements, the Treasury could pay a million or more of the public debt annually. It will also be perceived that the income from these sources is steadily increasing. For instance, in 1846, with the State tax at present rates, and the same extent of improvements in use, with nearly all the present sources of revenue in operation, the gross receipts amounted to but little over three and a half millions.

No more reliable estimate of the operations of the Treasury for 1855 can be made, than is furnished in the results for 1854. The ordinary receipts may be safely estimated at a million of dollars above the unavoidable expenditures. A portion of this excess will be required to complete the new Portage railroad, and the North Branch canal; and the remainder should be faithfully applied toward the payment of the State debt.

The aggregate receipts on the public works for the past year, as reported by the Canal Commissioners, amounted to the sum of $1,876,078 88; and the expenditures to the sum of $1,101,570 54; leaving a balance of $774,508 34, from which, however, should be deducted the sum of $37,900, properly chargeable to the year, for new locomotives and other unavoidable expenditures—thus reducing the net profits to $736,608 34. If we add to this, $131,000 00 received from the Pennsylvania railroad company for the three mill tax, which is claimed by some as a part of the income from the public works, we find a net revenue of $867,000; a sum equal to the interest on seventeen millions of the five per cent. debt of the State. The aggregate receipts were $57,121 less than for the year 1853, and the reduction in expenditures amounted to over $159,287,000. The withdrawal of the business of the Pennsylvania railroad from the Portage road, readily accounts for this difference.

Viewed in every aspect, this exhibit is gratifying. Few similar systems of improvement in the country can present a more favorable picture. Some of them, in other States, have recently been reduced to a condition of virtual insolvency. The increase of business on the State works for the two last years, has exceeded our anticipations; and but for the necessity which seemed to exist for a reduction in tolls to meet surrounding competition, the revenue would have been largely increased. The general movement now on foot amongst railroad companies, to advance these rates, may perhaps, relieve the State to some extent in this respect.

The Delaware division makes a most gratifying exhibit. The gross receipts counted $365,327 07, and the expenditures $59,738 67, showing a net profit of $305,588 40; a sum equal to the interest on six millions of the public debt, and to 20 per cent. on the original cost of the work, including the expenditures for new locks.

The North Branch canal and the Columbia railroad also present favorable results. The business and tolls on the former have increased with marked rapidity; and the management on both these branches bear the marks of skill and economy. The expenses on the Allegheny Portage road have been largely reduced, and the business better regulated than at any former period. As a whole, I feel constrained to say, that the condition of the public works has been improved during the last year: in no other particular, to so valuable an extent, as in the matter of contracting debts, which it seems has been almost entirely avoided. The officers on the respective lines report that they have paid all expenses; and some of them have gone so far as to say to the Canal Board that they will be personally responsible for any debts that may hereafter be discovered. This is truly a great reform—for nothing has cost the State so much, as the pernicious practice of making debts on the public works;—I still think it should be interdicted by positive law.

In my last message I gave my views at length, as to the principles and rules that should control in the management of the State improvements, and I need not repeat them in this. I would respectfully suggest, however, that so much of the law as binds the Canal Commissioners to a fixed rate of tolls for the whole season, should be repealed. The officers directing the operations of the public works should, it seems to me, be left free to meet the exigencies in trade and commerce, as they may arise.

The work on the Mountain railroad has progressed slowly, and it is obvious that it will not be fully completed before the summer of 1855. I must confess myself sadly disappointed as to the time and money consumed in the construction of this work. The expenditures, since I came into office, have greatly exceeded the whole amount estimated as necessary to complete the line; and yet, it is but justice to say, that the Pennsylvania railroad, lying parallel with it, has cost a still larger sum per mile.

I have endeavored, during my service, to guard against the commencement

of schemes of this or any other character, to entail future liabilities on the Treasury. This ought to be the settled policy of the State. No new improvements should be undertaken, upon any pretext whatever. The payment of the debt, and that only, should absorb the surplus revenues of the Trsasury. If this policy be pursued, no other financial scheme, to pay the debt, will be necessary. The large annual surplus will reduce the State's indebtedness with sufficient rapidity.

I regret, exceedingly, the necessity of announcing to you that the North Branch canal is not yet in full operation. It is now more than a year since the Canal Commissioners directed the water to be let into the main trunk of that improvement, and declared their confident belief, that it would be in successful operation by the middle of last summer; but their sanguine expectations, as well as those of the people, have, in this respect, been sadly disappointed. A variety of unforseen difficulties presented themselves in the way of the attainment of this end. The old work, constructed some twelve or fifteen years since, as well as some sections of the new, located on the hill side, near the margin of the river, when tested by the admission of water, turned out to be porous, and totally insufficient in its material and formation. In some instances rocks, roots, trees and stumps, have been concealed under the bottom of the canal channel, covered only by a few inches of earth; thus presenting but a slight obstruction to the passage of the water out into the bed of the river. This is especially the case in much of the old work. In all such sections or places, no remedy, short of a reconstruction of the bottom of the canal, could prove sufficient; and this was necessarily a tedious and expensive process. There is still a considerable portion of the work to remodel in this way; but it is confidently believed that it will be ready for use in the early part of the coming season. That the utmost skill and vigilance has at all times been exhibited by the agents of the State, on this line, I do not believe; but the deficiency, in this particular, on the new work, has not been so palpable as alleged by some. Indeed, since May last, great energy has characterized the management on this line; the President of the Canal Board having devoted much of his time to a personal supervision of the work. But it is obvious, no degree of capacity in the State's agents, for the last year, could have overcome all the difficulties that were encountered, with sufficient celerity, to have entirely satisfied public expectation.

At the time I came into office, the sum necessary to complete this work was estimated at $772,000. Since that time the sum of $1,206,552 72 has been expended, and it will still require, as estimated by the Canal Board, $60,000 to put it into complete operation.

Whilst I regret this unforseen cost and delay, I cannot refrain from repeating my unfaltering confidence in the wisdom of the policy that dictated the completion of this work. The large increase of business and tolls for the year just closed, on the older portion of the line, indicates what we may safely anticipate from the new; and, I cannot doubt, that the gross

amount of business it will command, and the revenue it will yield, will exceed the most sanguine expectations of its advocates. The inexhaustible mines of coal with which that section of the State abounds, the products of which are destined to pass through this avenue to a limitless market, will furnish for it a never failing supply of business and tonnage. Besides, its completion will be an act of justice to the industrious and enterprising inhabitants of that part of the Commonwealth, who have heretofore willingly contributed towards the construction of the other improvements of the State, from which they could derive but little advantage. It will, also, add to the general prosperity of the adjacent country; to the value of property, and consequently to the revenues of the State.

At the time of my induction into office the funded debt, including accrued interest, amounted to the sum of.....		$40,154,457 48
Add to this the loan of April, 1852, to complete the North Branch canal.....		850,000 00
		$41,004,457 48
Deduct payments as follow:		
Interest on outstanding certificates.....	$50,063 39	
Receipts to the sinking fund up to this time.	1,057,856 15	
		1,103,919 54
Total funded debt.....		$39,900 537 94
The floating debt and unpaid appropriations at the period already indicated.....		$1,421,090 15
Deduct the available balance then in the Treasury.....		750,000 00
		$671,090 15
The floating debt, temporary loans, unpaid appropriations, except for repairs after the 1st December, 1854.....		1,630,000 00
Balance in the Treasury November 30, 1854, after deducting the amount applicable to the old public debt and the relief issues then on hand.....		865,929 00
Balance.....		$765,929 00

During the same period the following appropriations and payments have been made toward the construction of new improvements, to wit:

For the re-constructing of the Columbia railroad.....	$514,407 66
For the new railroad over the Allegheny mountains.....	1,117,955 93
For the completion of the Western reservoir.....	52,388 00
For the North Branch canal.....	1,206,352 76
New locks on the Delaware division.....	100,319 99
Sundry special payments.....	95,353 71
	$3,086,778 05

The foregoing figures exhibit the astonishing fact, that the Treasury has been annually paying over a million of dollars towards the construction of new improvements, and at the same time accomplished a small reduction of the public debt.

As made my duty, by an act of the Legislature, approved the 27th of April last, providing for the sale of the main line of the public works, sealed proposals for its purchase were invited, up to the first Monday of July last. No offers were made under this invitation: and public notice was again given, on the 14th of November last, in accordance with the 29th section of the act, for proposals, to be submitted to the General Assembly; but none have been received. This improvement is, therefore, still the property of the State, subject to such disposition as the Legislature may deem necessary.

My mind has undergone no change, on the subject of selling the public works, since the period of my last message. I think the policy of the measure depends mainly upon the price that can be obtained, and the conditions on which purchasers may be willing to hold these works for the use of the public. With a full and fair consideration, and on terms amply protective of the rights and interests of the people, in the future enjoyment of these highways—a sale might not prove injurious to the public weal. But it is certainly neither wise nor politic to assume that they must be sold for whatever can be obtained; or that they should, in any event, be given away. Nothing could have a more prejudicial effect upon the interests of the State, as involved in these improvements, than the avowal of such a determination. Nor is it less unwise to disparage the value of the Commonwealth's property, at the very moment of putting it in market for sale. No intelligent private citizen would so act, in reference to his own estate. He would hardly give notice to capitalists, in advance, that he would sell his farm for a fair price; but if unwilling to pay such reasonable consideration, they could have it for half the money. Nor would such a person proclaim, that of all the farms in the country, his was the least productive.

It is certainly the wish of many good citizens of the State—perhaps of a majority—that the public works should be sold; but this desire is evidently based upon the assumption that the measure would be one of real economy—that it would lessen, without the hazard of increasing, their annual taxes. The realization, of such an object, it must be perceived, then, depends entirely upon the price and terms. Those who desire a sale, certainly expect the State to be the gainer by such a measure. No other important, or sufficient reason for parting with this property has been assigned.

It is usually said that the works should be sold to pay the public debt and lessen the burthens of the people: but it must be observed, that a sale might be made at a price far too low to effect such purpose; and if so, to give them away would be still less likely to produce the desired result. Should the

gross sum received, not be equal to that on which the nett earnings would pay the interest, then the effect would be to increase, rather than diminish these annual burthens. This is not what the people desire to accomplish by a sale; nor will they be satisfied with such disposition of their property.

The real value of the public works, is a proposition full of difficulty; and I doubt not the General Assembly will approach the inquiry, duly impressed with its importance. Ten millions of dollars was fixed, by the law of last session, as the price for the main line. This minimum is said by some to be too high, and the failure to sell, regarded as the consequence. Others attribute the absence of bidders, to the condition of the money market—to the stringent restrictions imposed upon the law; and to the efforts that had been previously made to disparage the value of the line. But it is obvious that more than one of these causes may have operated; and a greater than all may have been, the hope of getting this property on better terms, at a future time. I feel very confident that the latter consideration was not without its influence. But, be this as it may, it is certainly wiser to fail to sell from any one of these causes, than to hazard the works in the market, without any restriction or limitation as to price or conditions. A bad sale would assuredly be a greater misfortune, than no sale at all.

The benefits resulting to the people from these improvements, have been numerous and diversified. They have facilitated trade and commerce; stimulated productive industry in every department; and have not only enabled the farmer to reach a ready market with the fruits of his labor, but have furnished convenient out-lets for the rich mineral treasures of the State. Without them, the miner would be deprived of his occupation, the transporter be left in helpless destitution, and the Commonwealth itself be permitted to retain a parsimonious possession of vast masses of natural and unproductive riches. Our predecessors were wise in opening these avenues to trade and commerce; and if we wish to be rated wise hereafter, we shall not rashly and hastily throw away the advantages of their future use. This use, to the full extent, in the event of a sale, can only be secured by a jealous protection of the right of the people to enjoy it. The very first conditions of such a measure should be, that the works, and every branch of them, be kept at all times in good order and in operating condition, and remain forever public highways, for the use of all persons who may wish to transport goods or merchandize over them, upon rates not greater than those charged upon other similar improvements. No corporation should get possession of these valuable avenues, on such conditions as would enable it to impose unreasonable burthens on the internal trade and tonnage of the State, or in any way to encroach upon the rights of the individual citizen. To obviate such results, the powers, privileges and restrictions of any corporation getting the works, should be minutely defined. Past experience suggests these prudential counsels; for we have often seen in this State, how difficult it

is to confine the operations of these artificial bodies within the limits prescribed by the law; and we should not fail to profit by the lesson.

By the 29th section of the act of the 9th of May last, providing for the ordinary expenses of government and other purposes, Nimrod Strickland, of Chester county, John N. Purviance, of Butler county, and John Strohm, of Lancaster county, were named as commissioners to settle certain claims and debts against the Commonwealth. It was also made the duty of the Governor to supply, by appointment, any vacancy in this commission which might occur. The gentlemen already named having declined to serve, I accordingly appointed William W. Williamson, of Chester county, William English, of Philadelphia, and John C. Magill, of Westmoreland county, in their stead.

After a tedious and laborious investigation, these gentlemen have completed the duty assigned to them, and the result will be communicated to you, in detail, in their own report.

I regret to perceive that the accounts so examined and settled, exceed the amount of the appropriation nearly $150,000. It is well, however, to see the end of claims of this character; and having accomplished this, it will be prudent to guard against the recurrence of a similar state of affairs. Indeed, the practice of contracting debts on the public works, should be at once and forever abandoned. It has been a fruitful source of confusion in the accounts, if not of palpable wrong upon the Treasury. The right to scatter the credit of the Commonwealth in this unguarded way, is, I venture to assert, without a parallel in the management of public affairs. Of the many defects in the system of managing the State improvements, this has been the most productive of evil. In my first, as also in my last annual message, I most earnestly urged the General Assembly to provide, by law, that no debt should be contracted by the officers on the public works;—that the the necessary labor and material to maintain these works should be paid for in cash—and that each officer should be compelled to settle his accounts promptly. The examinations just made, demonstrate still more clearly the necessity for such reform.

Repeated attempts have been made to repeal so much of the act incorporating the Pennsylvania railroad company, as requires it to pay into the Treasury annually, a certain per centage on the amount of tonnage which may pass over that road as an equivalent for the privileges granted by the Commonwealth: but the General Assembly have as repeatedly rejected the proposition; and I sincerely hope, that so long as the State may need the revenue from this source, all future attempts to accomplish this end, may meet a similar fate.

Having been connected with the legislation which brought this company into existence, and clearly cognizant of the motives and purposes which governed the Legislature in imposing this condition on the grant, I can discover no reason, in subsequent events to justify the relinquishment of this valu-

able reservation; but many, on the contrary, to sustain its justice and utility. The discussions pending the incorporation of the company, will best indicate the object of this restriction. The construction of a railroad from Harrisburg to Pittsburg, parallel with the State works, was very properly urged as indispensably necessary to meet the wants of the travelling public, and to enable our metropolis to compete successfully with other commercial cities. The very first and most formidable difficulty which presented itself in the way of this enterprise, was the prejudicial effect such a work might have upon the business and profits of the main line of the public improvements. It was urged on the one hand, that the State works had been constructed at the expense of the people of the entire Commonwealth—that those residing in the extreme portions of the State, as well as those of the interior, had annually, contributed towards the payment of the interest on the debt which had thus been contracted; and, therefore, the Legislature could not, consistently with the principles of justice and equity, make a grant that would depreciate the value of property which belonged to all, for the purpose of fostering the growth and prosperity of a particular portion of the State. Good faith and correct moral principle forbade such action. On the other hand, it was alleged that the increased business which such an improvement would throw upon the Columbia railroad, and the enhanced value of property adjacent to the proposed road, from which the State would derive increased revenue in the form of taxes—would constitute an ample remuneration to her coffers, and thus do full justice to the people as the owners of the works to be affected. But a majority of the Legislature concluded that some additional benefits were demanded, and hence the adoption of the provision to which I have referred.

The stock was subscribed with a full knowledge of this reservation, and the acceptance of the charter by the company, was the consummation of a solemn agreement between them and the State.

Yet, under the specious plea that it imposes a tax on trade, the Commonwealth is now asked to relinquish this condition; and the case is argued as though it had been the policy of the law, that the company should impose this charge of three mills per ton upon every species of property which may pass over its road; and in this way it is very readily shown that on coal, iron, lumber and other cheap tonnage, this charge would be too great. But the company are not obliged to assess this tax on all kinds of tonnage; nor was it the intention of the act that they should do so. The design was to make an exaction from the nett profits of the company, for the use of the public coffers, as a compensation for a valuable grant, and thereby protect the public improvements from the competition of this new rival. The tax on tonnage, therefore, was intended to indicate only the mode of ascertaining the sum to be paid, and not the specific tonnage on which it should be charged When the sum is in this way ascertained, it matters not to the State how the

company obtains the money; whether it be by charges on freight, or on passengers—on local, or on through tonnage. Should, therefore, certain kinds of tonnage be improperly oppressed, the fault is with the company, not in the law. And surely it will not be contended that the protection thus thrown around the works of the State is unnecessary;—so far from this, the wisdom and utility of this feature of the company's charter has already been made manifest. The very exigency anticipated by the Legislature has arisen: the competition of the railroad is already seriously felt by the main line. Relieved from this restraint, but a meagre portion of the carrying trade would be left for that branch of our improvements. Nor will it be contended that the Commonwealth does not need this source of revenue.

But, viewed alone, as a matter interesting to the owners and transporters of tonnage, what guarantee would they have that the rates of transportation would be reduced, were this tax taken off? None whatever. The company could charge as heretofore, and thus realize the amount of the tax in addition to their present profits. If they should not do this, their action would differ from that of similar corporations under like circumstances. But to admit, what is claimed, that a reduction in the charges of transportation to a similar extent, would take place, it must be perceived would duplicate the loss to the State; for she would not only thereby lose the amount of the three mill tax, but be deprived of a very large portion of tonnage which would be attracted to the company's road by this reduction in the rates of transportation. We are thus brought to the simple inquiry, whether the State shall retain this valuable income, to which she is so justly entitled, or whether she shall give it to the railroad company. Most certainly the latter alternative should not be adopted, so long as the question of selling the State improvements remains undecided.

As a mere revenue measure, this tax constitutes an important and increasing item in the annual receipts of the Treasury. In the year 1853, it amounted to the sum of $74,000, and for the year 1854, to $131,000.

That this amount will be materially increased hereafter, is self-evident. If this important item be withdrawn from the sinking fund, there will be but little left to sustain its operations.

I am aware that these views may be met with the plausible argument that trade and commerce should not be thus burthened—that the effect is prejudicial to the business of the State. This is true to a certain extent; and should have its full weight in the adjustment of a question of this character. But it will scarcely be contended that trade and commerce should be sustained by contributions from a needy Treasury. On this principle, it could as reasonably be maintained that the State should make no charges whatever for the use of her own works.

The administration of Governor Shunk commenced the cancellation of the relief issues; and that of my immediate predecessor arrested the process,

leaving $650,163 00 of this unsightly currency in circulation. In the spring of 1853, the policy of cancellation was again resumed; and up to this date, $485,384 88 had been received into the sinking fund, applicable to that purpose, leaving the meagre sum of $154,778 12, to provide for. The gratifying fact is apparent, therefore, that, without any further legislation on this subject, the entire outstanding balance of relief notes can be withdrawn from circulation and destroyed during the current year. It is true that these issues have not come into the Treasury as rapidly as the funds for their cancellation have accumulated, and that, consequently, a portion of the receipts have not been invested; but this difficulty will be obviated in June next, when the law will go into operation which forbids the banks and receiving officers of the Commonwealth to pay out these issues, and requires them to be presented at the Treasury for cancellation. We shall, therefore, soon see the last of a currency which has polluted the channels of circulation for thirteen years past; and I trust that the lesson thus taught has been quite sufficient to warn us against similar errors for all time to come.

My opinions on all questions that concern the currency, have been so often expressed, that they must be well known to the Legislature, and need not be given, at length, in this communication. Without, at any time, assuming it would be wise for this State, regardless of the policy of other Commonwealths, to dispense suddenly and entirely with banks of issue, it has been uniformly held that the amount of banking capital as a basis for paper circulation, should be closely limited to the urgent wants of commerce and trade. If the experience of the country is worth any thing at all, it has demonstrated the correctness of this policy; and that the use of small bank notes should be discouraged and forbidden. In accordance with this view of the subject, I have, on past occasions, refused to sanction any extensive increase of banking capital.

Every commercial country is liable to alternate seasons of excitement and depression; to periods of extravagant over-trading, followed by ruinous revulsions. The reaction now felt is the inevitable, if not the natural counterpart of an undue expansion of credit, in the form of bank paper, railroad, State and corporation bonds and individual obligations. In those States where the free, or stock-banking system had stimulated the expansion, the workings of the reaction have been disastrous. In our own beloved Commonwealth the shock has been sensibly felt, though far less severe than in other parts of the country. Her partial escape, it is believed, is mainly owing to her prudent and restrictive policy in the use of bank credit. It is, at least, very clear, that had the free, or stock-banking plan, at one time so zealously advocated, been adopted in this State, or had our present system been greatly expanded, the position of affairs in our commercial metropolis would not have been so favorable as at present. Had the natural tendency to speculation received this artificial stimulant—the limits of safety, like the lessons of expe-

rience, would have been passed unheeded; as it is, some good men, in the pursuit of useful enterprises, have been prostrated. It is most unfortunate, that under this influence, all must suffer alike. Those who profit least by the expansion, are often effected most by the contraction. This is especially the case with labor, which is uniformly the last to be elevated in times of prosperity, and the first to go down in those of depression. The banks, as a general rule, make the most out of these convulsions. It is often their error to flatter the merchant and trader when the tide of prosperity runs high, and to forsake him on the first appearance of its ebbing. Even sound banks and of good repute, it is said, are seeking to make money out of the present crisis, by sharing their capital and its benefits with brokers and jobbers, instead of aiding the business community at legitimate rates. How far these allegations are warranted, it is difficult to decide; but it is to be hoped that few, if any of our banks are justly liable to this charge, for such a practice would be highly improper, and well calculated to excite discontent. Such a departure from legitimate business would demand a prompt remedy at your hands. It may be difficult to confine these institutions to their proper business, with the prospect of better profits in other quarters; but they should be made to feel that they have been created for a higher purpose than merely to enrich the stockholders.

The crisis is a trying one; but there is still reason to hope that the credit and trade of the country will never suffer as much as it has done on similar occasions, in times past. There is now no National Bank to mislead the mercantile class, and to embarrass the commerce which it professed to aid. Still the shock will be great enough to lead the public mind to enquire after a remedy for these periodical convulsions. And, surely, we may be permitted to hope, that the good sense of the people will never again be imposed upon by those crude experiments which have, on some former occasions, so fearfully aggravated the evils they were intended to remedy. I respectfully advise the General Assembly against all such experiments. The remedy, to be permanent, must be a natural one; artificial means may add to present derangements; but cannot correct them. An extensive increase of banking capital and other expedients will, doubtless, be pressed upon your attention; but it is hoped that no such fallacy may find favor. Nor is there any sufficient reason for the alarm and sensitiveness manifested in certain quarters; the real wealth of the country still exists, and the natural elements of prosperity are no less than heretofore. It is the shadow, not the substance that is passing away. The business community should look the danger bravely in the face, and by their energy, honesty and enterprise, overcome it. Mutual confidence and forbearance should be cherished by all, as a means of accomplishing this desirable end.

In accordance with the provisions of a law passed in April last, a vote of the people was taken, at the October election, on the policy of prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors; 158,342 votes were cast in favor of the measure, and 163,510 votes against it.

The proper regulation of this subject greatly concerns the moral welfare of the people, and for that reason will claim your anxious consideration. Perhaps no other moral question within the range of your authority, so deeply interests the people of every class, race and condition. Indeed, the immoderate use of intoxicating drinks is an evil that has left its fatal mark in every vicinage. Its progress, fortunately, has been steadily resisted by individuals and societies, who have employed the power of truth and reason against it. These efforts have done much, and may do more hereafter to mitigate the evil. Avoiding all vexatious encroachments upon the rights and privileges of every citizen, there is clearly no reason why the influence of a well designed law, regulating and restraining the sale of intoxicating liquors, should not be brought to the aid of these individual efforts. Although the vote of the people would seem to indicate their aversion to the particular measure of reform proposed, it is not to be inferred, for that reason they are averse to all attempts at reformation. Such an inference, I am confident, would not be a true reflection of their sentiments. So far from this, they acknowledge the existence of the evil and the necessity of proper remedies. Our present license laws, to this end, might, in my opinion, be usefully revised—the object of such revision being to lessen the vice of intemperance. That those laws need such revision, is conceded. So far as relates to the city of Philadelphia, they are peculiarly prejudicial to public morals, and seem to have been constructed to promote the convenience of drinking, far more than to restrain its evil consequences. The subject is worthy of your early and deliberate consideration.

The report of the Superintendent will exhibit to you in detail, the operations of the Common School system for the year just closed; and I respectfully recommend the suggestions of that officer to your careful consideration.

The general law of 1849, with amendments and modifications, was re-modelled by the last Legislature. The most material parts of the old law, which were omitted in the new, were the sub-district, the endowment, and sectarian features. The former was rejected because of the unnecessary multiplication of offices which it authorized, and the conflict which perpetually arose between the committees and directors; and the latter, because in manifest hostility to the true intent of the common school system. These provisions which seemed to contemplate a separate school establishment, under sectarian patronage, although controlled by the common school directors, were originally engrafted upon the acts of 1836 and 1838, and were again re-enacted in 1849. They were very properly stricken from the system by the law of last session. Should efforts be made in the future, at similar innovations, come whence they may, it is hoped they may be promptly rejected. The system to be effectual, must be simple and uniform in its operations. Special legislation, inconsistent with the general law, applicable to particular localities or districts, to answer temporary or partial ends, always has, and always will embarrass the administration of the general system, and should for this reason, be care-

fully avoided. The integrity of its forms, not less than the means to sustain its operations, should be constantly maintained, and sacredly cherished by the government.

A new feature in the system, adopted in the law of last session, creating the office of County Superintendent, has not, as yet, been fully tested; and there evidently exists some diversity of opinion as to the wisdom of the provision. It is already very obvious, at least, that its beneficial workings must depend mainly upon the character of the agents selected to carry it into operation. Competent and faithful Superintendents may produce the happiest results; whilst the agency of the ignorant or inefficient will be attended by the reverse consequences. In order to give this new feature of the law a fair trial, it will be necessary, therefore, for the directors, in the respective counties, to select Superintendents with sole reference to their adaptation to the duties of the station.

Of the many obstacles in the way of the complete success of our Common School system, the one most prominent, and most difficult to remove, is the want of competent teachers. In some communities, I regret to say, the system has fallen into comparative inefficiency, because good teachers cannot be found; and in others, the most vexatious consequences have arisen from the employment of the illiterate and incompetent. Nothing could exercise a more prejudicial influence; indeed, between a very bad teacher and none at all, the latter alternative might, in many instances, be preferred. This deficiency is clearly manifest, and hard to obviate. Some of the best minds of the State have been occupied and perplexed with it; and until recently no general and practicable plan for its removal had been devised.

The plan of granting permanent professional certificates, by officers skilled in the art of teaching, and eminent in literary and scientific acquirements, to teachers who satisfactorily pass a thorough examination, in the several branches of study, which the act of May, 1854, requires to be taught in every district, and also in the art of teaching—is already obviously effecting decided improvement in this regard, and it is believed will do much towards placing the profession upon a high and firm basis. Normal schools, it is urged, could in addition, to some extent supply the deficiency, but the expenses of such an institution would be heavy.

The source of this difficulty, it is clear, can be traced, in a great measure, to the want of a proper appreciation in the public mind, of the position and business of a teacher. The profession for this reason, in addition to the absence of fair compensation, has not been attractive. Indeed, it has scarcely been regarded as a profession at all, but rather as a preliminary step to some other pursuit. Well directed efforts have recently been made to change the general sentiment on this point, and I rejoice in the belief that these have not been in vain; and that the day is not far distant, when the profession of teacher will be equal to the aspirations of the most ambitious of our people; when its dis-

tinctions, dignities and pecuniary rewards, will command the time and attention of the most gifted. I can see no reason why this state of feeling should not prevail; why the profession of teacher should not rank in honor and profit with the other learned professions; why the the science of developing the human intellect—of giving scope and force to mind—of elevating the moral faculties of our race—of controlling the passions and tempering the desires, should not be esteemed as highly as those professions and callings, whose ornaments have received all their capacity and polish at the hands of the comparatively humble and illy rewarded teacher.

I earnestly recommend the common school system to your guardian care, as the most sacred of all our institutions. The offspring of a constitutional injunction on the Legislature—the extension and perpetuity of its usefulness, is the plain duty of all. Resting at the very foundation of the government, its practical workings should be a true reflection of our republican system, and its blessed opportunities made available to all, regardless of rank, or condition, or persuasion. It should aid the poor, advance the rich, and make the ignorant wise.

I confidently anticipate for it, a day of greater perfection and wider influence. No better object can engage the attention of government, or consume its means, than the education of the people in the most comprehensive sense of the term; embracing the use of letters, the cultivation of the moral faculties, and the diffusion of christian truth. In this we have the surest guarantee for the perpetuity of our republican government, and for the enjoyment of civil liberty and religious freedom. Such an education may be safely claimed as the most potent means of preventing crime—of increasing individual happiness and national dignity—of promoting christianity and civilization—of extirpating moral and political evils—of elevating, dignifying and adorning our social condition.

Our various charitable and reformatory institutions—so creditable to the State, and which, in their practical operations, have done so much for the relief of suffering humanity—will claim the continued care and bounty of the Commonwealth.

The State Lunatic Hospital at Harrisburg, under its present efficient control and management, meets the just anticipations of its wise and benevolent advocates. Its humane and benignant agency in ameliorating the condition of the unfortunate class for whose relief it was designed, can be judged by no ordinary standard. The benefits of such an institution rise above all mere pecuniary estimates. Its purposes address themselves to the best and noblest feelings of our nature, and can only be rated at the price of human hope and human reason.

A somewhat dissimilar, though not less meritorious institution has recently been established in Philadelphia, for the mental training of the Idiotic and the Imbecile. The astonishing results it has already achieved in developing and invigorating the weak and clouded intellect, should secure for it public

confidence and patronage. It commends itself to the bounty and care of the State.

The institutions for the education of the Deaf and Dumb, and Blind, will also need, as they justly merit, the usual annuity from the State. They are in a flourishing condition, and continue to bestow numberless blessings upon the unfortunate beings committed to their charge.

As a scheme for correcting and reclaiming wayward and offending youth, the House of Refuge stands pre-eminent; and is every where gaining public confidence. Its general influence upon this class of erring creatures, is far more effectual and humanizing than that of the ordinary modes of punishment. It takes charge of those whose offences are often the result of circumstances rather than criminal intent; who fall by the influence of bad example, of wicked association, of idle habits or animal necessities; or who sin because of the utter want of moral and mental perception; who do wrong, rather than right, because they have not the power to distinguish between them. For such unfortunate beings, the House of Refuge possesses the advantages of restraint and correction—with moral and intellectual training, as well as of instruction in the usual pursuits of life, without the disgrace and chilling influence of prison confinement. The results, therefore, often are, that its inmates go back to society, cured of all moral defection, and competent to fill the place of correct and useful members of community.

During the past summer, the magnificent structure erected under the supervision of certain benevolent gentlemen of Philadelphia, as a new House of Refuge, was completed and thrown open for public inspection. The capacity, order, and arrangements, in every particular, of this admirable building, are fully equal to the design of its founders. It is an honor to them and an ornament to the beautiful city in which it is situated; and its good effects in future, under the same systematic and wise discipline which so eminently distinguished its past management, will not be readily over-rated.

The western House of Refuge, situate on the banks of the Ohio river, a short distance below Pittsburg, I am gratified to say, is also completed and ready for inmates. Though less imposing, as to size and capacity, than its stately compeer of the east, it possesses all the order, economy of space, and perfect adaptation to the purposes designed, that characterize the more costly structure at Philadelphia; and it is also believed to be quite adequate, as to size, to present wants, while it is built with express reference to future additions, should they become necessary.

Neither of these buildings have, I presume, been erected without involving their projectors in pecuniary liability, and perhaps loss. The entire State has a deep interest in such truly meritorious institutions; and whatever relief can be given to them by the Legislature, consistently with the condition of the Treasury or our public engagements, should be cheerfully extended.

The interests of Agriculture are ardently commended to your care. Exten-

sive and energetic efforts have been recently made to disseminate correct information concerning this great pursuit, and in this way to confer upon the farmer the advantages of a scientific as well as a greatly refined, practical understanding of the noble pursuit in which he is engaged.

The utility of a College, devoted to the science of Agriculture, with a model farm attached—wherein the principles of a scientific cultivation of the soil, and manual labor in that pursuit, would be joined to the usual academical studies—has been strongly pressed upon my attention. It is believed that such an institution can be successfully organized, under the auspices of the State and County agricultural societies.

The practice adopted and maintained by the last General Assembly, in reference to omnibus bills and special legislation, is an improvement of such value as to commend itself as a settled rule; and I confidently trust this salutary precedent may not be disregarded.

Obscurity, confusion and inaccuracy in the construction of our laws, inroads upon private rights, and unguarded corporate privileges, litigation and confusion in the interpretation and administration of our statutes, have been the fruits of a loose and unguarded system of legislation. The evil has been one of the greatest magnitude, and the remedy should be cherished with unyielding tenacity. Special legislation has so little to recommend or sustain it in principle, it is surprising it has been so long endured. Although much was done by the two preceding legislatures by general laws, to obviate any supposed necessity for special acts, there still is much to be performed in avoiding a return to this unsafe practice. It is believed that general laws can be so framed as to avoid in most cases the necessity for special acts, and the proposition is most earnestly commended to your favorable consideration.

The omnibus system—a pernicious mode of legislation, by which the most opposite measures, good and bad, are thrown together in one bill and under one title—was, I rejoice to say, entirely broken down and discarded by the last General Assembly. The volume of laws for 1854 contains no acts of this character. Each law embraces but a single subject, and that indicated by its proper title.

The 55th section of the act providing for the expenses of Government for 1853, authorized and required the Governor to sell the State arsenal at Philadelphia, and apply the proceeds of such sale towards the purchase of another site and the erection of a new building; and restricting the expenditure to the sum received for the old property. The building and lot were readily sold for $30,000. The selection of a new location, and the erection of another building, presented a far more difficult task. I readily discovered that the sum thus appropriated was entirely inadequate to accomplish the end in view. The price of a similar location would leave but a meagre sum with which to erect the building. Under all the circumstances, I have not felt authorized to

attempt to carry out the law, and would respectively suggest the propriety of increasing the appropriation for this purpose.

The report of the present able and energetic Adjutant General will inform you of the condition of the military affairs of the State. This department of public affairs, I regret to say, has been in a confused and declining condition for several years.

The public Librarian has called my attention to the fact, that the law reports of twenty-two other States have been regularly received by this, and that no provision has ever been made, on our part, to reciprocate this courtesy and generosity. I respectfully suggest the propriety of authorizing some officers of the Government to procure the necessary copies of the Pennsylvania reports, to supply those States who have so generously added to our library.

The registration act, I respectfully suggest, has essentially failed to accomplish the end designed, and should be repealed or amended. A record so incomplete and imperfect can do no good; but may really do harm. It has already cost the State about $25,000, to which there must be annual additions. The object is a desirable one, but I am confident it can never be attained by the mode contemplated in this law. It is a subject of constant complaint by registers and physicians, and only such registration is made as is compulsory, in order to legalize letters of administration.

By the 67th section of the appropriation law of last session the Secretary of the Commonwealth was authorized to continue the publication of the Archives to the year 1790. Under this authority the selection of documents from 1783 to 1790 has been made, and the tenth volume, containing this matter, will be ready for distribution before the close of the session. Two additional volumes will complete the work as originally designed.

The councils of Philadelphia, by an ordinance passed in October, 1852, dedicated the necessary ground in Independence Square, to the erection of a monument commemorative of the Declaration of Independence; and tendered the possession of the premises to the representatives of nine or more of the original States.

Since that time, the States of New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Georgia and Pennsylvania, have signified their willingness to accept the proposition on the terms indicated by the councils, and to participate in this patriotic work. Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and the two Carolinas, have taken no action on the subject.

I cannot refrain from again expressing my unabated solicitude for the success of this movement. If American history furnishes a single event worthy of commemoration by a monument, the Declaration of Independence is that event. In moral grandeur it is without a parallel, and stands above all others for the mighty influence which it has exerted upon the political, religious and

social condition of mankind. It has been justly said, it ushered in a new member into the family of nations and electrified all Europe. It opened new revelations of liberty, and changed the relations of people and government, by teaching the one how to resist and conquer oppression, and the other the absolute necessity to its own continuance, of recognizing and respecting the rights of humanity. From that time forth, a new, vital and quickening spirit has pervaded the world. Thrones have been shaken, empires have been overturned, society has been convulsed, blood and carnage have desolated the earth; but still the intelligence and souls of the people of all Christendom have been so vivified, elevated and expanded, to a comprehension of their rights, as will never be obliterated or forgotten; but will advance, enlarge and increase, until that moral and social preparation for the appreciation and enjoyment of liberty shall be effected, which, in the divine economy is so indispensable to the permanence of free institutions.

As the third generation of that posterity, for whom the men of the revolution chiefly labored and suffered, and died, it is peculiarly fitting that we should erect such representations of their great and controlling acts as shall speak to our own hearts, to our children's hearts, and shall testify to God and the world, that we appreciate and reverence, and would cultivate and disseminate the mighty truths and principles which brought our nation into existence, which constitute its very life, and of which it seems designated by Providence to be—the special defender and protector.

I believe we should have a monument to perpetuate the remembrance of the great event, from which such manifold and inestimable blessings have sprung; some imperishable memorial of our gratitude to the authors of the Declaration of Independence; to the heroes who participated in the mighty struggle; an enduring witness of the great things done amongst us and for us; an embodiment of the origin and principles of our government; some distinguishing mark of the place of the nation's birth; a consecrated temple of liberty, about which unborn generations of Americans may meet and renew their assurances of fidelity to the principles of the Declaration and to their natural offspring—the Constitution and the Union. I am for this work most earnestly; and I trust that Pennsylvania will not permit it to fail; but that it may be pressed upon the attention of the original thirteen States, until each and all shall evince a willingness and determination to participate in the erection of this glorious structure. To this end I respectfully suggest to the General Assembly, the propriety of again calling the attention of the original States to the subject, by resolution or otherwise.

In closing my last communication to the General Assembly, and terminating my official relations with the people of my native Commonwealth, I may be indulged in a brief and general reference to her present proud position as a member of the great family of States, and to the patriotism, integrity, and general prosperity of her citizens. The advantageous geographical position

of Pennsylvania, with a fine harbor open to the Atlantic, and another connecting her centrally with the magnificent chain of western lake navigation—her long branching rivers, spreading their arms and arteries through every portion of her territory—all added to her fertile soil and exhaustless deposits of valuable minerals—present a combination of the natural elements of greatness, scarcely equalled in our own or any other quarter of the globe. These have made her an attractive field for the science, industry, and enterprise of man; and all her natural advantages have been cherished and cultivated, until she has reached a condition of varied wealth and positive prosperity. Her system of internal improvements will safely compare with those of any sister State, whether in regard to completeness in construction, or the extent of country which they traverse. Nor have the higher hopes of humanity been disregarded by our statesmen, and the people at large; as the liberal provisions for common schools, Academies and Colleges, and our numerous crowded Churches attest: while, at the same time, the various Asylums for the insane, and for the unfortunate of all classes and conditions, and Houses of Refuge, for the reformation of the wayward and erring, silently, yet surely, bear witness that the cause of benevolence has always found effective advocates within her borders.

In physical improvement and population her progress has been steady and rapid. In the days of Governor Snyder the erection of a bridge over the Susquehanna river, and the construction of a turnpike road was the subject of executive exultation, and a matter of congratulation among the people. Now her whole surface is checkered over with railroads, canals and other highways. Then the whole revenues of the State amounted to but $450,000. Now they exceed five millions. Of the four large States her per centage of increase in population, since 1840, is the greatest; and she has besides excelled the best of her sisters in the production of wheat, iron and coal. Her population numbers not less than two and a half millions; nearly as large as all the States at the time of the Revolution. The present value of her real and personal estates exceeds $850,000,000. Her annual production of coal is worth in the market over twenty millions. Her great interests of agriculture, manufactures and commerce are rapidly extending.

She has, in addition, a history, of which we may well be proud. Within her limits is found the birth-place of Independence—that sacred spot where was first declared those great truths which lie at the foundation of American nationality. In the maintainance of those truths, she bore a glorious part. Her contribution of men to the field, and money to the treasury—of talent and wisdom to the Congress of the Colonies, were not surpassed by those of any other State. It was her sons who crossed the Delaware in the dead of winter, under the lead of Washington, and for a time turned the tide of war. Again, in the struggle of 1812, for the rights of American citizenship, and in that of 1846, for American honor and progress, she contributed with a profuse

generosity. The contest amongst her sons was not as to who should have the right to stay at home, but who should have the privilege of going into the field. Bearing this honorable part in matters of foreign war—she has had a no less enviable participation in allaying domestic strifes. Whenever the exigency seemed to require it, she has stood firmly by the Constitution and the Union, and ever contended for the rights of all sections of the country, and all classes and denominations of the people. Such is our State. To live and die within her limits, and to have borne even a very humble part in her civil service and in her history, I shall ever esteem as a proud privilege—one that, as it draws nearer to its close, swells my heart with gratitude to her people, at the recollection of the numerous proofs of confidence I have experienced at their hands.

The fullness of my exultation in the character and happy condition of our beloved Commonwealth, and of the gratitude I have expressed, leaves no room in my bosom for even a lingering regret at a decision of my fellow-citizens, which is soon to relieve me from the cares and labors of a public life. Its transient excitements have already been forgotten, and its alienations, if any, forgiven. I shall resume my place in the ranks of the people, with a calm consciousness of having always sought to advance their best interests to the extent of my ability; and of never having yielded my convictions of right, either in subservience to any selfish purpose, or any narrow and unworthy prejudice.

Having adverted to various subjects of congratulation, in regard to the public affairs of my own State, I may be indulged in a brief reference, also, to the happy aspect of our common country, and the elevation it has reached among the nations of the earth, in the light of liberty, and through the workings of its benign institutions. Who amongst us, and throughout this broad land, does not experience at this moment, and at every moment, in his own condition, and the condition of those who surround him, the influence and benefit of our happy Union, and the well considered compact by which it is sustained. A basis of calculation, exhibited by past experience, will give our country a population of thirty millions in less than ten years from the present time—of eighty millions in thirty years to come—and of one hundred millions at the close of the present century! But mere numbers are of no moment, compared with moral elements, in a nation's greatness. The vital strength and stability of the United States, as a people, consists in the substantial interest which each individual has in the permanency of those glorious institutions, which were baptised in the blood of our revolutionary struggle, and handed down to us as the sacred legacy of our fathers. Peril, or destroy these, and we peril or destroy the share of sovereignty and equality which they were designed to secure, alike to the richest and poorest, to the highest and humblest in the land. The experience of more than three-fourths of a century proves, I am persuaded, that the American people, in the main,

truly appreciate the beneficent structure and beautiful operation of our republican system. We have been assailed by an insidious and open hostility from abroad, and have, at times before the present, been encountered by both the concealed and palpable spirit of faction at home; yet the Constitution still stands as widely and firmly rivetted in the affections of the honest masses of American freemen, as at any former period of our history.

The more fruitful sources of our national prosperity, undoubtedly consist in the feeedom, industry and intelligence of our people; and in the rich natural resources of our country, united to an advantageous commercial intercourse with a warring world. But there is one element which we should cherish as more potent than all these: it is the protection and encouragement afforded by the union of the States, under an adequate and stable government. To this and the virtue of our citizens, under the smiles of Heaven, we are more indebted as a people, than to any other circumstance or relation. No one who has studied our history, and marked the spirit in which our Union was formed, can avoid the conviction that our government so far as concerns the stability of this confederacy, must be one of opinion rather than force. Born in compromise and conciliation, it must be cherished in the same spirit; it must present itself to every member of this republic in the welcome guise of friendship and protection—not in overbearing pride, or as weilding the strong arm of power.

We have before us the plain, written compact of our fathers, to which they reflectingly consented and subscribed, and so bound us who have succeeded them. Its blessings and its benefits have been felt throughout long years of unexampled prosperity. If we would change any of its provisions, let us, with at least common honesty and manliness, pursue the mode of amendment which is pointed out, with admirable precision, in the noble instrument itself. But until this is done, those amongst us, who, from whatever motive, or under whatever pretext, either openly repudiate any of its plain provisions, or, covertly retreating under the cloak of a secret organization, seek to violate its spirit, or avoid compliance with its clear behests, dishonor the faith of their fathers, and deny their own palpable and solemn obligations. Entertaining these views, how can any American patriot regard, with the least degree of complacency, the continued and embittered excitement of one section of the country against the domestic institutions of another; or the more recent organization of secrect societies throughout the Union, based upon doctrines of exclusion and proscription, utterly at war with our National and State constitutions, and obnoxious to the liberal spirit of American republicanism? What admirer of the venerated father of his country, but must now feel, with resistless force, his solemn warnings against secret societies for political ends, as placing a powerful engine in the hands of the selfish and designing, and enabling them not only to acquire power unworthily, but also to sap and destroy the most sacred principles of our government?

In these reflections upon certain political organizations, if I rightly comprehend my own motives, I am actuated by no mere partisan hostility or resentment. Were I to say less at the present moment, I should stifle my clearest convictions of right, and shrink from a duty I owe to the people of Pennsylvania, who have so generously sustained me in various public relations in the past. Nay, more: I should, by silence in this regard, fail properly to reflect that constancy and unswerving faith which our noble Commonwealth has ever evinced towards the principles of our national compact, in reference to the freedom of conscience and universal religious toleration; and also to the wise doctrines of popular and State sovereignty, and the inherent right of self-government.

During the brief period which remains of my official term, I shall readily and cheerfully co-operate with the General Assembly in all proper measures, to advance the public weal; and I earnestly invoke upon our labors, and the labors of those who may follow us in our public vocation, the kindly care and keeping of that Great and Beneficent Being who holds the destinies of nations as well as of individuals, as it were, in the hollow of his hand, and without whose continued smile there can be neither national or individual prosperity.

WM. BIGLER.

EXECUTIVE CHAMBER,
Harrisburg, January 3, 1855.